

Mr. GRAHAM. All I can say is to the soldiers and to the military personnel who participated in the Iraq fight, you did your job. President Bush made mistakes. To his credit, he adjusted. He made a lot of mistakes upfront, but he did adjust because the surge did work.

President Obama was dealt a pretty good hand when it came to Iraq. Things were better on the security front. Economic and political progress was well noted. His decision not to leave a residual force behind has come back to haunt us, Iraq, and the entire region. It was his decision. We tried to blame the Iraqis. That is just rewriting the history. When he decided to turn down the entire recommendation of his national security team—the national security team's entire recommendation—about doing a no-fly zone and helping the Free Syrian Army 3 years ago, everything Senator MCCAIN said about that decision has come true. Radical Islamists filled in that vacuum.

What you see in the Middle East is as a result of bad policy choices, but what you see today is the beginning of the worst decision, which would be a bad deal with Iran in dealing Congress out.

To the American people, here is one thing I promise you. We and the Congress in a bipartisan fashion will make sure that any deal, if there is one, negotiating with the Iranians, will come to this body to be openly debated so you will know what is in it, and every Member of this Senate is going to take a vote as to whether it is good enough to lift congressional sanctions that we created.

I promise we are not going to allow the most historic decision any President will make any time soon to go without checks and balances. It will come to this body. We will have a vote. I promise you this: If this administration believes there is a hard-line moderate split between those who govern Iran, it should scare you because it scares me. Given what Senator MCCAIN has described, do you really believe there is a moderate element in Iran?

I hope we can reach a diplomatic conclusion to the Iranian nuclear ambitions. They have been lying about their nuclear program for 20 years. I would like to see a good deal, but I will insist on voting on a deal that leads to congressional sanctions.

To the Germans, our friends in Germany, the Foreign Minister of Germany said the letter empowered the Iranians. With all due respect to our German allies, that is the most ridiculous statement I think I have ever heard. Requiring a deal between the Iranians and involving congressional sanctions to come back to the Congress should not embolden anybody. I don't know if the deal you are negotiating goes to the Parliament—the Bundestag in Germany—but we do things a certain way. The efforts of the French and the Germans to discipline Putin, how well has that turned out? We have a group of nations trying to deal with the most thuggish regime in the world

acting like the Keystone Kops, in my view.

Mr. MCCAIN. Could I remind the Senator that it is the same German Foreign Minister who criticized us and sat by and watched the dismemberment of a European nation for the first time in 70 years; the same Foreign Minister who keeps threatening Vladimir Putin if he keeps this up, and Vladimir Putin continues his aggression and will continue his aggression as well.

I can't give up the floor without mentioning, again, my sorrow at the passage of and murder of my friend, Boris Nemstov. The recent arrests by Vladimir Putin's crack law enforcement team is reminiscent—they rounded up some Chechens—of everybody's favorite film “Casablanca” where at the end, Claude Raine says, “Round up the usual suspects.” We have seen a scene from that movie again as the Russians have rounded up the usual suspects. Under this regime in Russia, we will never know who the murderers are of Boris Nemstov; and that, my friends, is a tragedy.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, today I rise to support the Justice for Trafficking Victims Act, and I want to commend the numerous Senators—CORNYN, KLOBUCHAR, and so many others—who have worked so hard to move this act forward.

I realize there are many of us who are new to this body, and I certainly am still learning my way around the procedural maze here. However, it is easy to see how frustrating this maze can be and how it keeps us from getting good things done for the people who elected us and sent us here.

Last year I traveled my State, Alaska, and one of the top concerns I heard from Alaskans is that they were tired of the gridlock, and they want to see a functioning government and an open process in the Senate. So here we are on a bill that is of immense importance to the country and to Alaska—a bill that has very broad bipartisan support. It comes to the floor with a promise of an open amendment process so all Senators can be heard. Yet, a few of my friends on the other side of the aisle are preventing us from moving forward on a bill that will protect some of the Nation's most vulnerable citizens. Evidently a provision in the bill that has been the law of the land for decades has now become an excuse among some not to move the bill forward.

That is a shame for the country, and particularly for the victims who have

been snared in the heinous world of human trafficking. As a former attorney general of the great State of Alaska, I have seen the horrible pain and suffering that human trafficking and cases of domestic violence and sexual assault can cause among our fellow citizens. I hail from a great State. We are proud Alaskans, proud of many things that are wonderful about our State. But like most States, we have problems. We have some of the highest rates of sexual abuse and exploitation in the country. Human trafficking is a big problem in my State, just as it is throughout the rest of the country. Since the human trafficking bill was placed on the calendar, I have been working closely with all of my colleagues, not only on this bill but on an amendment that I plan on offering with many others, the Mann Act cooperation amendment. This is an amendment that would be a rare thing in Washington today, a truly win-win amendment for the Federal Government, State governments, and most importantly, for victims of human trafficking.

Now, human trafficking is a problem that, unfortunately, comes in many forms and in many States—all States, in fact—in all corners of our Nation. In order to best combat human trafficking, we must work toward a seamless Federal and State partnership in order to stop this growing problem.

To that end, I have been proud to have worked with many Senators on both sides of the aisle—Senators HEITKAMP, GILLIBRAND, AYOTTE, and MURKOWSKI—on a simple yet straightforward amendment that incentivizes State and Federal cooperation on this important issue.

The Mann Act cooperation amendment will free Federal resources by allowing State attorneys general and local DAs to prosecute human trafficking cases that would otherwise be assigned to Federal Government prosecutors; or if Federal Government prosecutors do not have the resources to take on such cases, oftentimes they are not going to be pursued.

At the same time, this amendment preserves the Federal prosecutor's ability to exercise prosecutorial options while, importantly, increasing transparency about decisions made on human trafficking cases.

In human trafficking cases, it is often local investigators and local prosecutors who have the most information on these cases. As Alaska's attorney general, I saw this firsthand. We usually had great cooperation with our partners in the Federal Government.

But when the Feds can't take on human trafficking cases due to limited resources, they should be encouraged to allow State officials to take on such cases. That is the key goal of this amendment—to enable the resources and cooperation between State and Federal prosecutors to ensure that all cases of human trafficking are pursued, victims have justice, and perpetrators

pay penalties. That is what this amendment will do. That is why I believe it is such a win-win approach to State and Federal prosecutions with regard to human trafficking.

This amendment also provides oversight and transparency by assuring there must also be communication between the States and the Federal Government when making human trafficking prosecution decisions.

However, as to the broader human trafficking bill that so many Members of this body have been working on—so many on both sides of the aisle—if that bill dies on the Senate floor, so will the numerous amendments that would also advance justice for the victims of human trafficking, including the Mann Act cooperation amendment. This is just one of many amendments on this important topic. We should not allow this to happen.

We need to get to work for the victims of human trafficking, who are looking for the Senate's leadership to help stamp out this scourge of human trafficking, which is affecting our country in so many different areas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

DISABILITY INSURANCE TRUST FUND

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise to speak again on the impending exhaustion of reserves in the disability insurance program or the disability insurance trust fund.

As we know, disability insurance, or DI, is an important program administered by Social Security Administration, or SSA. The impending exhaustion of the DI trust fund threatens disabled American workers with benefit cuts, under current law, toward the end of calendar year 2016.

Once again, I am committed to working with anyone to ensure that those cuts do not occur. Unfortunately, the administration and SSA have yet to show they are committed to addressing this problem.

As chair of the Senate Finance Committee, I will continue speaking on the floor about the imminent challenge that we face with the DI trust fund and about solutions.

I will continue to reach out to shareholders and to anyone who is interested in bipartisan discussions aimed at achieving solutions. And I will be acting to at least begin to chip away at the financial challenges facing the DI program, which I have been warning people about for years—that it is going to go broke unless we do something to improve them. I do believe we should act at least to begin to chip away at the financial challenges the DI program is facing, while examining ways we can help improve and modernize the Social Security system itself.

I once again call on my friends on the other side of the aisle and in the administration to join me in this effort.

I wish to take a moment to note that some recent proposals to reform Social Security that have been put forward by some of my friends on the other side of the aisle are, simply put, irresponsible. We have seen proposals recently to raise taxes in the Social Security Program, usually to increase net progressivity in an already progressive structure and then spend most of the revenue on benefit expansion without adequately considering the fact that even under their proposal we have gaping long-run holes in Social Security's finances. Raising taxes and increasing some benefits now, while still leaving an unsustainable financial structure in place, would be fundamentally unfair to younger generations of workers who will have to eventually pay even more taxes, suffer from benefit cuts or, more likely, both.

The so-called progressive reform plans that tax more and promise more benefits, even though the promises are unsustainable, are surely poll-tested with demographic groups who probably do not scoff at promises of more benefits and higher taxes on the so-called rich. Those plans may help in fundraising for numerous groups who try to benefit from the politics of fear surrounding the Social Security system.

But those plans do nothing for younger generations of workers, aside from sending them a clear message that they are on their own.

Again, this is irresponsible.

More generally, some believe that we could solve all or most of the financial challenges facing the DI program and Social Security, in general, through higher taxes.

To investigate whether that is the case, I made several requests of the Congressional Budget Office regarding this strategy. Recent analysis performed in response to those requests shows how difficult this approach can be.

Most proposals to reform Social Security by raising payroll taxes would result in massive tax increases, particularly on the middle class—on middle-class Americans—which would negatively impact job growth and harm middle-income families. That is hardly what our economy needs.

For example, according to CBO, if you wanted to generate long-term balance between inflows and outflows for the DI program—using a DI payroll tax increase alone—you would have to increase the tax rate by 39 percent, which would hit low-, middle-, and upper-income earners alike, and it would hit hard.

If you wanted to generate long-term balance for Social Security, generally, including DI and retirement, and try to do it by eliminating the maximum on earnings subject to the payroll tax and resulting benefits, according to CBO, a worker earning \$150,000 a year would pay about 26 percent more in payroll taxes. A worker earning \$200,000 a year would pay about 68 percent more, and a worker earning \$250,000 a year would pay 109 percent more.

Now, it may be that raising taxes by 26 percent to more than 100 percent on those earners is something that my friends on the other side of the aisle are comfortable with—under the notion of taxing the so-called rich.

I would note, of course, that while a family headed by someone earning \$150,000 a year may be comfortable in many areas of the country, it appears that the ever-changing definition of rich is descending lower and lower into the middle class, as my friends on the other side have lectured more and more over recent years about inequality.

Even if you were to eliminate the taxable minimum entirely but still provide corresponding benefits to upper earners in accordance with current law, only around 45 percent of Social Security's long-run financial challenges would be addressed. You would still need to hike taxes more, cut benefits, or both, to fully address the program's long-term fiscal problems. Because upper earners will pay more taxes but also receive corresponding benefits, since Social Security was designed to have such a correspondence, the policy of increasing the taxable maximum ends up giving higher replacement rates to upper earners.

That hardly seems to be a workable solution—since it doesn't solve the financial problem, and it doesn't solve the inequality problem that is so bothersome to my friends on the other side.

Perhaps just for the sake of argument, we should consider eliminating the taxable minimum, thereby raising taxes substantially on upper earners, and not giving them any corresponding benefits for those increased tax payments.

Of course, such a policy is bothersome to some of my friends on the other side of the aisle, since it breaks the connection in Social Security between what people put in and what they get out.

Some would say that this would convert Social Security into another welfare program focused on redistribution and away from a program focused more on self-financed retirement security and protection against income losses from disability. So, instead, maybe we should consider eliminating the taxable maximum and give some small benefit return in exchange.

Well, in such a case, according to CBO, you would still not be able to solve the financial challenges facing Social Security. Using scheduled benefits and replacement rates “would increase noticeably only for people in the highest quintile of lifetime household earnings.” I don't think that result would be desirable to the tax-the-rich coalition.

Let me continue by noting some recent remarks on the Senate floor from the junior Senator from Vermont and the ranking member of the Budget Committee, who promises to put forward what he suggests is a courageous way to confront Social Security's financial challenges.